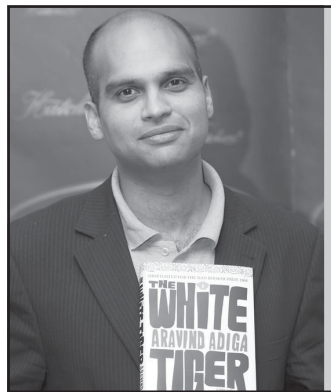


Adiga's Next To Be Out In 2011



New Delhi: (IANS) After winning the 2008 Man Booker Prize for his debut novel, "The White Tiger", Indian-born author Aravind Adiga will publish his second venture "Last Man in the Tower" in early 2011, the author's publisher said Thursday.

The Indian rights for Adiga's new novel have been acquired by HarperCollins India.

Unlike his first novel which was set in New Delhi, Adiga's second book is set in the business capital of the country, Mumbai.

V.K. Karthika, chief editor and publisher at HarperCollins India, said: "Last Man in the Tower" is a sweeping novel about contemporary India, more particularly Mumbai. Adiga's characters are unforgettable, his prose riveting."

The fourth Indian-born author to win the Booker Prize - others being Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai, Adiga had over 150,000 copies of the hardback version of his "The

White Tiger" sold since its publication in April 2008.

The paperback version of the book is due to be out in December this year.

Asterix, France's Most Popular Cultural Hero, Turns 50

Paris: (DPA) According to one of their creators, the small, wily Gaul Asterix and his oversized, clumsy friend Obelix were born under the influence of friendship, desperation and a great deal of alcohol. In August 1959, writer Rene Goscinny and illustrator Albert Uderzo met at the latter's apartment in the Paris suburb of Pantin to dream up a story and some characters for a comic strip to be published in the first edition of the weekly magazine Pilote.

The launch was only two months away and the two close friends had no idea on what they would do. At the time, aside from the Belgian strips Tintin and Spirou, French newspapers carried primarily American comics. The founder of Pilote wanted French children to be able to read stories in which their own culture dominated.

Goscinny and Uderzo, both in their early thirties at the time, had been successfully working together for seven years. On this sunny August afternoon, they "drank a great deal" of pastis and "smoked enormously", Uderzo said. After considering and eliminating stories set in the prehistoric and Cro-Magnon eras, they hit upon the Gauls.

"The Gauls," they thought, "liked to have a good laugh, to talk big and were bon vivants. I think we've got something there."

That something - the continuing story of a small village of Gauls who resist the mighty Roman legions of Julius Caesar that have occupied the rest of the country - was an immediate hit and soon became an international phenomenon. Asterix first appeared in serial form in Pilote Oct 29, 1959. Fifty years later, 34 comic albums have been published in 107 languages, including Urdu, Arabic and Latin.

More than 325 million copies of the albums have been sold, making Goscinny and Uderzo France's best-selling authors abroad. In addition, the series has spawned 11 films, eight of them animated, a number of games and a popular theme park outside the French capital.

Many fans say that the series lost its heart when Goscinny died in 1977 and Uderzo took over the script-writing. But the popularity of the cartoon has not fallen off at all.

And the 82-year-old Uderzo has ensured that Asterix and Obelix will outlive him by selling their rights to the publishing giant Hachette and appointing three young artists to take over upon his death.

Uderzo's first sketches of Asterix were of a big Gallic warrior, but Goscinny saw him differently. They finally came up with a hero who would be small but wily and tough.

"As perceptible as a punctuation mark," Uderzo said.

The strength would be provided by his best friend Obelix, a roly-poly red-haired giant prone to pratfalls, falling in love and drinking too much.

The obese Obelix has become the reader's favorite, according to opinion polls. It has also not hurt his allure that he was portrayed in two films by French megastar Gerard Depardieu. The stalwart duo and their friends quickly became a major component of French culture, so much so that during a meeting of his cabinet in the early 1960s, then president Charles de Gaulle resorted to calling his ministers by names taken from the strip.

In addition, the first French satellite sent into space, Nov 26, 1965, bore the name Asterix.

"When I heard that, I prayed that it wouldn't break down," Uderzo said.

In commemorating the 50th anniversary of the first Asterix comic strip, the daily Le Figaro wrote, "They embody the French spirit as few heroes before them have and none after them!"

But that doesn't explain their worldwide appeal. Uderzo once told the BBC that their popularity was down to "the revenge of the small against the strong, which the audience can relate to."

But perhaps people simply love them because they have a lot of Gaul.



Big B Makes 'Aladin' A Cool Family Entertainer

Film: "Aladin"; Cast: Amitabh Bachchan, Sanjay Dutt, Riteish Deshmukh, Jacqueline Fernandes, Saahil Khan, Ratna Pathak; Director: Sujoy Ghosh;
Rating: *1/2**

"I am still a teenager", says Amitabh Bachchan right at the beginning of "Aladin", setting the mood for the film to follow. Young at heart and fresh in treatment, "Aladin" wouldn't have been possible without him.

Playing Genius - The Genie could have gone either way since he is expected to be whacky, quirky, a little eccentric, a bit mad and hugely lovable.

The narrative is clearly divided into two sec-

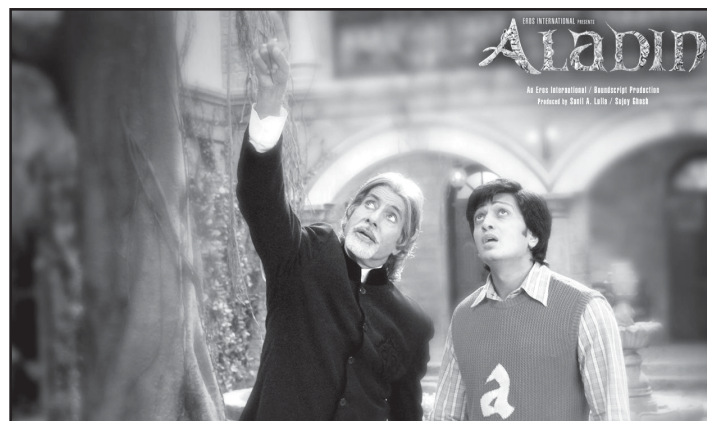
Meanwhile, Sanjay Dutt's Ringmaster character makes on and off appearances, though one would have expected to see more of him.

The entire past about Aladin and the Genius gets a little confusing.

The real fun begins in the second half with the battle between good versus evil. Sanjay becomes more prominent on screen, the past is unearthed, action and thrills take centre stage and the best of VFX is unveiled.

The visuals belong to the never-seen-before variety, especially the ones where Big B is shown repenting about his misdeeds. The flashback sequence is extremely well done too.

Sujoy Ghosh does well in conjuring the imaginary world of 'Khwaish' that gives the film a visual appeal. This is further enhanced by the presence of newcomer Jacqueline Fernandes.



tions. If the first half is more children friendly, the second half has a lot going for teenagers and above.

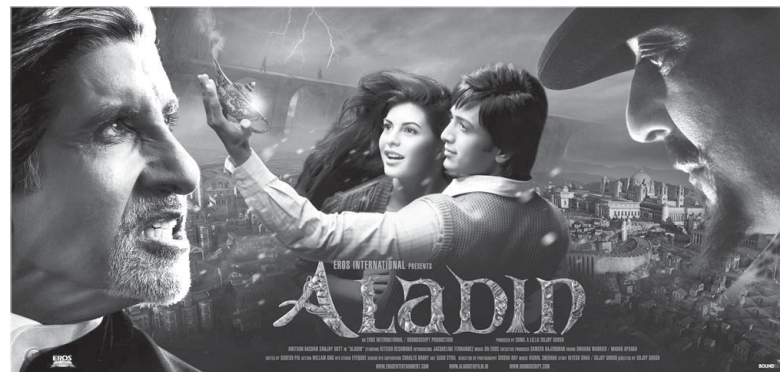
There is some fun in store for children with a donkey's head replacing Riteish's, his guitar turning into a frog and him being thrown in the air after being turned into a balloon. The funny antics that follow may not have grown ups rolling with laugh-

Riteish is likeable as the young man who gets superpowers towards the film's end, hence keeping an option for a sequel.

Sanjay is good but how one wishes that he had at least a couple of dramatic scenes with Amitabh.

However, the film completely belongs to Amitabh who totally steals the show. Watch him in "Genie Rap" and you'll know why.

The story of "Aladin" is legendary and Genie and Jasmine are known worldwide. This is why it requires courage for a filmmaker to set the film in contemporary times and come



ter, but should surely keep the smiles on.

Amitabh's 'Yo dude' act keeps the fun going. He adopts a completely different body language as the flamboyant genie, who is happy moving on with the times, and could give the younger generation a run for its money.

up with his own take on a well loved tale.

Ghosh does exactly that as he lets his imagination go wild and spins a tale that ends up relating the past, present and future of these characters. This VFX filled entertainer is just the right recipe if one is looking for a family entertainer.

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